



European Commission

With support from the European
Community
DG Employment, Social Affairs
and Equal Opportunities

Transnational inventory of good practices: template WLB

Introduction

The aim of this phase of the project is to collect the results of existing policies and good practices in the promotion of men and fathers in work / life balance. These policies and practices can come from a number of different actors: public, private, NGOs. They can be identified at various levels, and a given local setting can offer men and fathers possibilities resulting from national policies as well as local policies. In our transnational inventory, it is important that we distinguish between these levels as well as between the actors who promoted and designed them. As we have seen, major differences can exist among countries regarding the relevant policy level: it depends both on the history of the welfare state as well as on the political environment in which these policies have taken place.

Targets

It should be noted that policies and good practices for men and fathers may not have them as their explicit primary target: for instance, the city of Paris implemented a policy of augmenting childcare facilities which aimed explicitly at facilitating work/life balance. The target, unspecified, encompasses both mothers and fathers. In fact, many policies target *parents* no matter their gender, and should however be included in the inventory. Some policies may have been designed primarily for mothers and then be extended to fathers also (such as parental leave in some cases). On the contrary, some policies target specific groups of men and/or fathers: migrants, unemployed... If such is the case, please specify the target of these policies.

The context in which policies were elaborated

Parenthood and gender relations are issues which are subjected to contradictory views from the part of different political actors such as elected representatives, politicians, NGO activists and public intellectuals. As we said, the historical context plays a great part: depending on the kind of welfare state – or lack thereof – at various points in recent history, such issues as childcare and the sharing of domestic tasks have been met with various solutions.

Therefore, in order to assess the current trends regarding policies and good practices in the promotion of men and fathers in work / life balance, it is important to understand the debates surrounding the creation and implementation of such policies. Such information may be found in the numerous reports which are being written on gender and family policies, as well as in

the press – of course informal discussions with actors involved in the promotion of men and fathers in work / life balance is a good way to get this information. The press is also a good place to look at. And you may always use formal interviews or informal discussions which you had with insiders of these policies.

Last but not least, the economic context of policies aimed at men and fathers is very important. Work-life balance, as we found, became an issue when the participation of women to the labour market became generalized. In France, female employment outside the home is inversely correlated to the number of children and the household income. On the other hand, the UK report showed very clearly that the participation of men is also inversely correlated to the household income. This challenges preconceptions about the class structure of gender relations with regards to work-life balance: it is not true in all countries that the more deprived household display a low level of participation of men and fathers to domestic tasks.

Good AND bad practices (policy failures)

It seems important to highlight good as well as bad practices in the field of local policies directed to men and fathers. Most of the time, inventories of policies focus on good practices only, and are based on the belief that these good practices can easily be transferred from one local situation to another. But an overview of bad practices, or, if you prefer, policy failures, can be very useful too, especially when the reasons for failure can be highlighted. Some policies may be efficient when applied to a certain type of target group, but not to another, because of cultural or sociological reasons. For example, a policy which might be efficient in a liberal type of society may be less effective in a very patriarchal one. Therefore, one policy which has failed in a specific situation might well prove to be efficient in another. An inventory of both policy successes and policy failures would therefore be particularly useful, mentioning in each case the possible reasons for success or failure.

Content of the inventory

The expected deliverable is a report of at least 10 pages, which should follow exactly the template. For the purpose of comparison, it is important that each aspect should be documented, even if the answer is that it does not exist or is not significant.

- The core of the inventory is based on the description of work-life balance policies: are they national, local, European? What was the context in which they were elaborated?
- It is important that we understand who were the actors involved in the process of the elaboration, testing, implementation, evaluation of the policy: politicians? Employers? Schools and childcare facilities? Father's NGOs? Churches? Etc...
- It is always very interesting to see whether a policy has been evaluated.

I. Updates from the previous inventory

Since the first inventory was completed, have any changes taken place in this policy area? Is it currently debated?

What is the current situation on the labour market, and how does it affect work-life balance practices and policies?

“In Belgium, there has been a renewal of grey literature on family policies in 1994, with changes in labour regulations to allow part time work and the adoption of parental leave in

1995, and in 2004 with debates related to the possible extension of the parental leave.”(p.1): Could you please specify under which circumstances this renewal has taken place? Have there been any prominent “whistleblowers” with regards to the hardships experienced by fathers or the necessity to involve fathers more?

“There are civil society groups that have been really active in Belgium: association of father¹, but also conservatism movements such as the church influenced group “la famille c’est vraiment important” fighting against abortion, and marriage or adoption for the people from the same sex.”(p.3): could you map out the field of civil society organisations specifically mobilised around fatherhood issues? What have been their relationships with policymakers?

“The above mentioned measures are not in accordance with recent speeches and trends to facilitate work life balance for women and men.” (p.4): Have there been actors or mobilisations focused on this discrepancy? Are there trends asking that policies become more congruent with each other?

“The regional level is not competent, and the local level can only take small scale initiatives especially in the area of fight against discriminations.”(p.6): Could you give examples of such policies in the field of work-life balance or gender in general?

II. Best and worst practices

We ask teams to include detailed examples of one policy which has succeeded and one which has failed. These policies may be of any nature.

Please describe in details:

- who was involved in its creation,
- its implementation,
- how it went,
- why it failed or succeeded.

III. Case study

Please consider a recent local work-life balance policy aimed at fathers.

- The genesis of the policy: Explain how it was created. Who made it? Was there any debate (either public or within the institution) surrounding it? Who was in favour of it, and who was against it?

- Description of the policy: who are the beneficiaries? How do they have access to it?
- Implementation of the policy: has it been fully implemented yet? What have been the reactions of key stakeholders with regards to it?
- Evaluation: has the policy been evaluated yet? If not, based on the results of the Focus Groups and on your personal expertise, do you think it has addressed work-life balance issues experienced by fathers in an efficient way?

¹ <http://www.lespapas.com>